

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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CPR-02 /086 W

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R 270800Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3079

INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 2462

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, AS, US

SUBJ: US AND THE AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS

REF: CANBERRA 2435

1. OPPOSITON IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS STRESSING THE NEED TO RESTORE A TRADITIONALLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH US (REFTEL). ALP FEELS SOME SENSITIVITY ON THIS SCORE. (COMMENT: NOT SURPRISINGLY END COMMENT) GOA IS THEREFORE ENDEAVORING TO PROVE THAT US CONNECTION AND ALLIANCE HAVE NOT BEEN IMPAIRED DURING PAST SIXTEEN MONTHS OF LABOR GOVERNMENT. THUS, FONMIN WILLESEE'S ANXIETY ABOUT SENIOR AMERICAN VISITOR FOR CORAL SEA CEREMONIES.

2. THREE RECENT INCIDENTS SHOW EXTENT TO WHICH GOVERNMENT (AND PRO-LABOR REPORTERS) UTILIZE AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO PUSH IMAGE OF WARM US/AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS.

(A) ON APRIL 18 TWO PROMINENT ALP LEADERS (NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT JACK EGERTON AND BRISBANE MAYOR CLEM JONES) WERE AT LUNCHEON IN BRISBANE ATTENDED BY AMBASSADOR.

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PHOTOGRAPHERS FLOCKED ABOUT AND NEWSPAPERS FEATURED

PHOTOS OF THE THREE TOGETHER. OUR BRISBANE CONSUL WAS LATER TOLD THAT WHITLAM WAS "DELIGHTED" WITH PICTURES WHICH WOULD LOSE VOTES FOR OPPOSITION.

(B) ABC TV NEWSCLIP OF ANZAC DAY CEREMONY APRIL 25 NOTICEABLY EMPHASIZED PRESENCE OF AMERICAN AMBASSADOR.

(C) "THIS DAY TONIGHT", EVENING NEWS PROGRAM APRIL 24 FEATURED FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE BETWEEN FONMIN WILLESEE AND OPPOSITION SHADOW FONMIN ANDREW PEACOCK. WILLESEE NOTED THAT "MR. MARSHALL GREEN, THE MOST SENIOR PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMAT THAT AMERICA HAS EVER HAD IN AUSTRALIA" HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO A LABOR GOVERNMENT. WILLESEE THEN QUOTED AMBASSADOR AS FOLLOWS: "AUSTRALIA HAS AN INDEPENDENT STANCE IN WORLD AFFAIRS WHICH COMPORTS WITH AUSTRALIA'S DIGNITY AND IMPORTANCE -- IT SERVES EVERYONE'S INTERESTS FOR AUSTRALIA TO EXERCISE A GREATER INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD SCENE. WE IN AMERICA HAVE NO QUARREL WITH THIS NATURAL PHENOMENON AND INDEED WE SEE IT AS POTENTIALLY STRENGTHENING OUR RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA."

3. COMMENT: QUOTATION IS CHARACTERISTIC OF AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS DURING HIS EARLY MONTHS IN AUSTRALIA. FACT THAT WILLESEE IS WILLING TO CITE AMBASSADOR OUT OF CONTEXT IN SUPPORT OF LABOR POSITION SHOWS LENGTHS TO WHICH ALP WILL GO DURING REMAINING THREE WEEKS OF ELECTION CAMPAIGN TO PROVE ITS POINT. EMBASSY WILL EXERCISE GREAT CAUTION AND AVOID ANY COMMENT ON STATE OF AUSTRALIAN/AMERICAN RELATIONS EVEN IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD NORMALLY BE INNOCUOUS. CORAL SEA EVENTS WILL OF COURSE BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE AND WE CAN ASSUME GOA WILL ENDEAVOR TO EXPLOIT THE TRADITIONAL AUSTRALIAN/AMERICAN COMRADESHIP THIS COMMORATION ENGENDERS.
GREEN

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